



## United States Department of Justice

United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Tennessee

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**January 23, 2006**

### **ROANE COUNTY GENERAL SESSIONS JUDGE INDICTED**

James R. Dedrick, Acting United States Attorney, Eastern District of Tennessee, R. Joe Clark, Special Agent in Charge, Knoxville Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mark Gwyn, Director, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, and James D. Moore, Special Agent in Charge, East Criminal Investigation Division, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, announce the federal indictment of Roane County General Sessions Court Judge Thomas Alva Austin, 57, of Roane County, Tennessee. The indictment charges Judge Austin with seven (7) counts of Hobbs Act Extortion, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1951, and one (1) count of money laundering. The indictment additionally seeks the forfeiture of several assets belonging to the defendant.

The federal indictment alleges that Austin took in excess of \$13,500 in cash and property as bribery payments between June and December 2005. The indictment further alleges that Austin took steps to conceal the ownership and control of property he received as bribes.

If Austin is convicted, each count of the extortion provides for a maximum sentence of twenty (20) years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$250,000; the money laundering count provides for a

maximum sentence of twenty (20) years imprisonment, and a fine of up to \$250,000, in addition to terms of supervised release. Convicted defendants of federal violations are not subject to parole from imprisonment.

The investigation, resulting in the above referenced indictment, was a joint effort between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. The case was initiated by the referral of information to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation by Ninth Judicial District Attorney General Scott McCluen.

R. Joe Clark, Special Agent in Charge, Knoxville Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation said, "Public corruption undermines the very foundation of our society. That foundation depends on the trust we place in our public officials. Corruption will not be tolerated in East Tennessee." Special Agent in Charge Clark also pointed out that this investigation is ongoing and anyone with information should contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Public Corruption Hotline at 1-888-678-6720. TBI Director Mark Gwyn said, "This case is simply a continuation of the TBI's commitment to fighting public corruption. I hope it gives citizens some measure of comfort to know that law enforcement is watching." Acting United States Attorney Russ Dedrick added, "Public Corruption by law enforcement and judicial officials make all citizens victims of crime. The investigation and prosecution of public corruption involving our public officials and law enforcement will remain a priority of federal law enforcement efforts in East Tennessee."

Austin was released on conditional bond this afternoon following his initial appearance and arraignment before United States Magistrate Judge Bruce Guyton. He was ordered by the Court to regularly report to Federal Pre-trial Services and be screened for drugs, not possess any firearms, and not have contact with any witness in this matter. The trial is set for March 29, 2006, in United States District Court, Knoxville, Tennessee, before the Honorable Thomas W. Phillips.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Charles E. Atchley, Jr. of the Eastern District of Tennessee. For more information, contact Acting United States Attorney, James R. Dedrick, AUSA Charles E. Atchley, Jr. or Sharry Dedman-Beard, Public Information Officer at 865-545-4167.